

SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALES, *EUBALAENA AUSTRALIS* (DESMOULINS, 1822), IN HERVEY BAY, QUEENSLAND. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* 47(2): 430. 2001:- Noad (2000) and Chilvers (2000) reported southern right whales in the Moreton and North Stradbroke Island regions of southern Queensland in 1998 and 1999 respectively. The lowest latitude sighting was 26°58'S at Flinders Reef.

At 9.30am on 27 September 2000 a southern right whale and calf were seen at 24°51'S, 153°08'E during a humpback whale sighting cruise in the Hervey Bay Marine Park. The mother/calf pair was moving slowly and milling at that location. They were observed and photographed from ~300m and were 'aloof' and 'shy' — characteristics commonly seen with humpback whale mothers and calves. The typical 'stubby' pectoral fin of the species was noted (Fig. 1A), as were the tail flukes (Fig. 1B), absence of a dorsal fin (Fig. 1C) and the 'bonnet' of the lightly-pigmented (presumably recently born) calf (Fig. 1D). Reports indicate that the pair was in the northern portion of Hervey Bay for at least two days.

This sighting extends the northern range of the species on the east Australian coast by 2° of latitude and supports the suggestion of Best (1993) that the range of formerly over-exploited mysticetes may expand as their populations

increase. The 'pre-whaling' range of southern right whales may have included Queensland waters but their near extinction in Australia by the early 1840s presumably precluded knowledge (at least by Europeans) of their occurrence at low latitudes. The above reports, in three consecutive years, may represent re-occupation of a former range and hopefully the species may become more frequent visitors to the Queensland coast, thus supporting the prediction of Noad (2000).

Acknowledgements

Members of the Hervey Bay whale watch fleet are thanked for their reports on the presence of the whales thus enabling this report.

Literature Cited

- BEST, P.B. 1993. Increase rates in severely depleted stocks of baleen whales. *ICES Journal of Marine Science* 50: 169-186.
 CHILVERS, B.L. 2000. Southern right whales *Eubalaena australis* (Desmoulins, 1822) in Moreton Bay, Queensland. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* 45(2): 576.
 NOAD, M.J. 2000. A southern right whale *Eubalaena australis* (Desmoulins, 1822) in southern Queensland waters. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* 45(2): 556.

Jason Brigden, *Whalesong Cruises*, PO Box 620, Hervey Bay 4655, Australia; 20 March 2001.

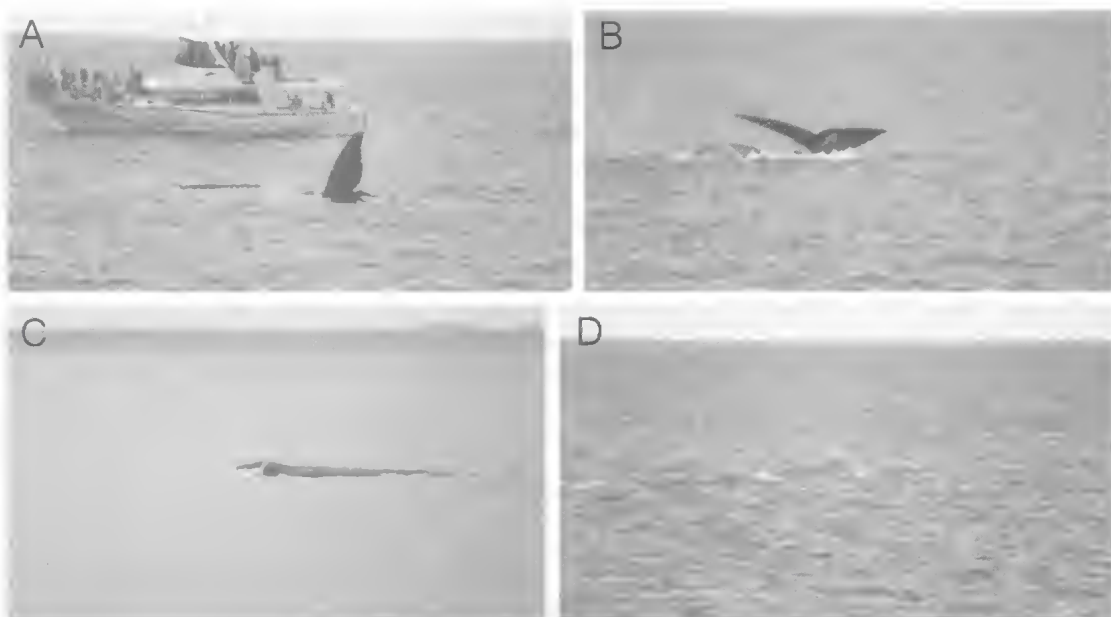


FIG. 1. Southern right whales in Hervey Bay, Queensland. A, pectoral fin of adult. B, fluke-up dive of adult. C, absence of a dorsal fin evident on adult. D, bonnet and generally light colouration of calf.